

RE.A.CH

Religious Education for Adolescents and Children

2013 - 2014

FAMILY HANDBOOK



RE.A.CH Dates for Levels PK-EDGE

Church Sessions	Home Sessions
09.08.13	
	09.15.13
09.22.13	
	09.29.13
10.06.13	
	10.13.13
10.20.13	
	10.27.13
11.03.13	
11.10.13	
	11.17.13
	11.24.13
12.01.13	
12.08.13	
	12.15.13
	12.22.13
	12.29.13
	01.05.14
01.12.14	
	01.19.14
01.26.14	
	02.02.14
02.09.14	
	02.16.14
02.23.14	
	03.02.14
03.09.14	
	03.16.14
03.23.14	
	03.30.14
04.06.14	
	04.13.14
	04.20.14
04.27.14	
05.04.14	
	05.11.14
05.18.14	

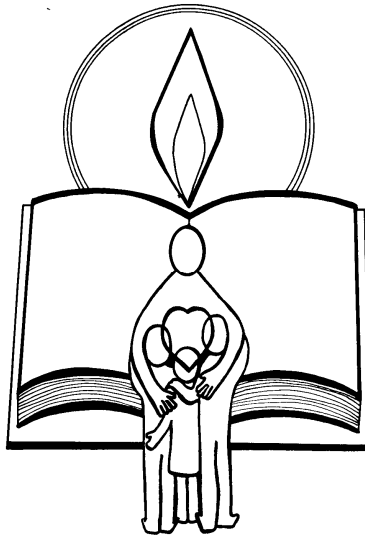
Parent/Child Open House
September 8, 2013 from 9:45-10:30 AM

(Pick up textbooks, Annual Plans and meet the Catechists)

Morning Session:	10:20-11:45 am
Afternoon Session:	12:30-2:00 pm
Evening Session:	4:30-6:00 pm

Youth ministry seeks

- *to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ,*
- *to draw them into responsible participation in the life and mission of the Church, and*
- *to foster their personal and spiritual growth.*



National Directory for Catechesis, p. 11.

The Spirituality of RE.A.CH

Religious Education is a lifelong process beginning at the moment of Baptism and extending throughout adulthood. We never outgrow our need for spiritual nourishment and continuing growth in understanding our Catholic Faith.

In our Religious Education programs for children we acknowledge that parents are the first educators of their children in the faith. In the Rite of Baptism the minister addresses the parents, saying:

“On your part, you must make it your constant care to bring your child up in the practice of the faith.”

We want to support you in fulfilling this awesome responsibility by providing an “**Annual Plan**” for home and church sessions based on the materials appropriate for each age level.

We form a “Partnership” with parents in the Faith First Program, offering 18 sessions taught by a catechist at St. Thomas More, and 18 sessions for parents, as catechists, to complete at home, so that there is weekly instruction. These sessions build on one another, so two things are very important:

- regular attendance at class, and
- faithful completion of home sessions.

Picture these 36 sessions as a completed puzzle. Each session that is completed adds a piece to the children's understanding of how much Jesus loves them and the meaning of their faith journey.



An “**Annual Plan**” is sent home at the beginning of the year outlining the materials to be covered at home and at church. We ask that the chapter assigned be covered during the week indicated so that the program will have continuity. Children should not work ahead in the text.

Home Sessions

Calendars, "Annual Plans", schedules, the weekly Parish bulletin, and other information can be found at www.stmoside.org.



Catechists, both at home and at church, are encouraged to create a climate that is **not** "school." The best atmosphere is one in which faith is shared. To have children read the chapter and fill out the pages with no personal interaction makes it difficult for children to get excited about their faith.

To cover a chapter in a number of mini-sessions at home may be more effective for your child rather than trying to do it all at one time. Try to keep it a positive and prayerful experience.

Here are some "real life" suggestions from current parents for making home sessions meaningful:

- "Start with a prayer, asking God to bless us with the ability to teach and to understand what we are being taught."
- "Eliminate distractions."
- "Put our home session day and time on the calendar and do it as a family."
- "We need to sit down and embrace the session instead of treating it like homework."

The *At Home Family Guide* offers parents direction for completing home sessions and allows you to gather children in Levels 1-5 at the same time and still provide age-appropriate learning. Home sessions are "theme-oriented" rather than "chapter-oriented."

If you are working with just one child, the family guide will provide you with valuable resources, adding quality to your home sessions.

Teaching by example is the most effective means of sharing faith. If you are able to attend the Parish opportunities offered by Faith Formation for Adults, your child sees that your faith development is important to you too!

Overview of Programs



Pre-K, and Kindergarten: ages 3,4,5

Sunday morning RE.A.CH classes take place during the whole of the 10:30 Mass, two times a month on the lower level for children who are 3, 4, and 5 years of age. The lectionary readings from Mass for the Sunday provide the basis of instruction for church and home sessions.

Parents are to personally present the child to the catechist at 10:20 AM and pick the child up personally from the catechist at the conclusion of Mass. The security of the child is our main concern, which is why we require personal contact each session.

The curriculum for the early years helps children discover God already present in their lives and in their homes and families. It incorporates active self-expression, discovery and inquiry, language and thinking, social relationships, music, art, and prayer. Children discover and value all life and all creation as God's gifts to us. They discover they can "make a difference" and change our world for the better. They can love and care for one another, forgive one another, and celebrate life as a small Christian community. Children intuitively respond to God's love for them because they are innately spiritual.

Levels 1 through 5

The program for children in these levels is offered two times a month.

Families may choose the Sunday,

12:30-2:00 PM session (A), or

4:30-6:00 PM session (B).



"Level" is equivalent to "grade in school" **IF** the child has the appropriate religious education background. Placement is made by the Director of Faith Formation after consultation with the family.

The *Faith First* program, Legacy Edition, produced by RCL Benziger, is the basis for faith-sharing at Levels 1-5 levels. It follows the same approach that Jesus did. Jesus taught us *what* to believe and then showed us how to *put those beliefs into practice*. This program is based on our beliefs as explained by the Catholic Church.

The doctrines have been passed down to us through the generations and are at this time gathered into the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The four pillars of the Catechism are the basis of each level of *Faith First*:

- What we believe,
- How we worship,
- How we live, and
- How we pray

Different aspects of each pillar are presented each year.

Every level also celebrates our journey as Catholic Christians re-living the story of our salvation: passing through the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary Time.

Doctrine, scripture, and the liturgical year are therefore balanced each year as an integrated whole, woven into the everyday life and experience of the children.

FaithFirst.com is an award-winning website enabling youth ministry without walls! It provides faith-based time on the internet for all age levels from kindergarten through catechists and parents.

Middle School

6th, 7th, and 8th graders participate in EDGE which combines the content of religious education with the fun and community of youth group.

This program is designed to bring middle schoolers all together in one group for a comprehensive youth ministry program based on, focused on, and directed toward Jesus Christ.



At this age, middle school youth are open to good and bad behaviors as well as positive and negative ideas. Many of the values and beliefs that they held as children are now questioned and challenged. As young adolescents they are trying to figure out who they are and what they believe.

This program is designed to meet them right where they are and tap into the educational, spiritual, emotional, and social needs of young adolescents. This ministry draws every aspect of a tween's life into a faith connection and a journey with, and for, Jesus Christ.

Teen Faith Formation

High school classes generally meet on consecutive Sundays from 6:30-8:30pm. See the back cover for dates. The classes are divided into 5 week Core Courses and 3 week Mini Courses that cover different aspects of Catholic faith and practice. The classes are highly interactive and team-building. With our trained catechists, passionate volunteers, and small class sizes, nobody is left out or overlooked.

Classes are first and foremost for teen spiritual growth in the Catholic faith and encounter with the God who loves them. The classes provide the strength to say "Yes" to God at whatever level the teen feels that promise and dedication can be made. This process is first and foremost a labor of love.

Attendance is not mandatory, so teens are free to attend the classes and explore the Faith as it speaks to them. However, should the teen seek Confirmation, one year of adequate high school Faith Formation must have been accumulated. Only classes that have been sufficiently completed will be considered.

Teens are also enrolled into the hospitality ministry program at the Parish. This is a fun chance to get to know the Parish community, and have an interactive role at the Masses.

Attendance Policy

Students are asked to be on time! Parents are asked to insure their children's promptness so that they participate completely in the session and are not a distraction for others in the class. Parents: come inside at the end of class to join in closing prayer and insure your child reaches the car safely.

If, for serious reason, a child must leave class early, the parent should come to the hospitality table, and we will get your child from class for you. Sending a note with your child will allow the catechist to give your child materials that may be passed out at the end of class and provide the least disruption to the class.

If a student has two unexcused absences in a row, it will be the understanding of the Church of St. Thomas More that **the parent has made the choice** to withdraw the child from the program.

This policy is part of the Covenant we sign at the time of enrollment. We can't do our job if your child is not present.

We give you our dates and times for the whole year NOW, so that you can get them on your calendar. Then it is up to your conscience to set your priorities. Of course, we hope you will put your child's faith development at the top of your list!

An "excused absence" is one in which you notify the Faith Formation Office in advance that your child will not be in class:

**760-758-4100 x110 or
*kathleenb@stmoside.org***



Annual Fees

Tuition for one child: \$100.00
+
Per additional child: \$50.00
(maximum: \$250.00/family)

“AT HOME” Family Guide: \$25.00

For families with children in Levels 1-5 for your home sessions
The same book lasts for many years.

Scholarship fund contribution: Would you care to include a small gift (\$5 or \$10?) to help our families in need of assistance?

Reconciliation/Eucharist year: \$30.00 (materials fee)

Fees may be paid by:

- cash,
- check (payable to St. Thomas More),
- credit card (Visa, Mastercard or Discover),
- a written payment plan , or
- tithing.

Assessment

Accountability is an important fact of life. All of the texts we use provide various forms of assessment. Chapter and unit reviews/ tests allow the catechists to evaluate the effectiveness of personal teaching as well as the level of understanding from home sessions.

These assessments help us evaluate together the level of understanding by the student of the faith concepts presented in each level.

NOTE: The Director of Faith Formation recommends promotion to the next level only when a student has adequately demonstrated an understanding of the faith concepts in the current level.

Progress reports are an opportunity for home and church catechists to share how we are doing.

Sacramental Preparation

RCIA

This process prepares children over the age of 7 to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. The time involved depends on the individual child. This young person also participates in RE.A.CH classes at the same time.

First Reconciliation and Eucharist

There is a two-year period of preparation. Typically beginning in Level 1, both sacraments are then celebrated in Level 2. Immediate preparation is done by the parents during the second year.

Six mandatory parent meetings are held from 12:30-2:00 PM to equip parents with the theology and materials to carry out this important responsibility. Again church and home share in this "partnership", Please mark these dates on your calendar now:

September 22, 2013, October 20, 2013, December 1, 2013
January 26, 2014, March 9, 2014, May 4, 2014

First Reconciliation: December 15, 2013 4:00 PM

First Eucharist: May 31, 2014 5:00 PM
June 1, 2014 8:30 & 10:30 AM

Confirmation

Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation is a one-year process, provided the teen has successfully completed one year of high school faith formation. As a participant in Teen Faith Formation, the choice to participate in the additional Confirmation formation is available. The teen enters a period of discernment to assess readiness for accepting the responsibility the Confirmation process expects. This includes interviews and a life-changing discernment retreat. If the teen is ready to begin the Confirmation process, they will resume faith formation classes with additional social justice and ministerial obligations, and a specialized Confirmation track in the spring.

Parish Contacts

The Director of Faith Formation is responsible for the development, coordination, administration, and evaluation of all programs designed to meet the religious education needs of the Parish community. All Parishioners, from our youngest to our oldest, deserve the opportunity to continue growing in knowledge and love of their Catholic faith.

Faith Formation Staff:

Kathleen Bell

Marcus Cabrera

Stacey Griffin

Director of Faith Formation

Youth Advocate

Faith Formation Office Assistant

Discipline

Catechists use positive methods of encouraging appropriate behavior. When inappropriate behavior prevents the catechist from teaching and other students from participating, the catechist discusses the situation with the Director of Faith Formation. Parents will be contacted so that we can work together to maintain a climate of mutual respect.

Portfolios



There is a portfolio in the Faith Formation Office for each student in our program. This contains the "faith history" of each student from September 2000.

Tests, special projects, progress reports, and an end-of-the-year artifact are included, as well as anything else the catechist feels is significant. These are always accessible to parents and students.

Safe Environment

In compliance with Diocesan policy, all volunteers for lay church ministry who work with young people at St. Thomas More undergo a voluntary background screening to insure the safety of your children while they are in our care. Safe Environment training is required by the diocese for all our youth. Catechists begin the conversation and parents continue the conversation with age appropriate materials that are sent home in advance.

Special Needs

Parents are encouraged to speak with the Director of Faith Formation regarding special learning styles or particular needs of students in our program. If we are aware we can accommodate more carefully students who might need special consideration.

Please note that the emergency card provides a place for you to indicate special needs, including academic needs.

Students with special needs are welcome in our Religious Education programs. If specialized instruction is needed we will make every effort to provide for it.

Student Insurance

All youth participating in Parish educational ministry activities are covered under the blanket accident/medical insurance program administered through Myers Stevens.

Visitors

Because our classes are structured in such a way that they build on each other, and because catechists prepare for a certain number of children, it is difficult to welcome drop-in visitors. In addition, emergency information and insurance are available only for children enrolled in our program. Your understanding is appreciated.

Covenant

At the time of enrollment, each family signs a "*Statement of Partnership*". This is to remind you of our Parish's commitment to your family's ongoing religious education, and to spell out the family's responsibilities as well. Since the signed document is on the back of your enrollment card, a copy follows for your reference:

The Catechetical Staff at St. Thomas More will:

- Share faith through class sessions on our site through the dedicated service of volunteer catechists
- Remain in good communication with families through Progress Reports and phone and email availability
- Provide an "Annual Plan" that clearly outlines the curriculum for home and class sessions throughout the year
- Provide quality liturgical experiences for families, including Liturgy of the Word for Children

On behalf of the Church of St. Thomas More, I enter into this covenant:

Director of Faith Formation

Date

The family will:

- Provide spiritual support by attending Mass **every week** with my child, and
- Pray as a family
- Share faith through home sessions, according to the "Annual Plan"
- Remain in good communication by sharing concerns/support with the DCM and/or catechist as needed, and reporting on home sessions on the Progress Reports
- Follow the "Annual Plan" in sharing faith in our homes sessions
- Phone or email the Faith Formation Office in advance when absence is unavoidable

On behalf of the _____ family, I enter into this covenant:

Parent Signature

Date

Attendance Policy:

If a student has two unexcused absences in a row, it will be the understanding of the Church of St. Thomas More that **the parent has made the choice** to withdraw the child from the program.

Parent Initials, indicating understanding :

RE.A.CH Dates for High School Level

June 30, 12:00 Noon: Parent/Teen Orientation
(for those **continuing**
the high school program)

September 12, 7:00 PM: Parent/Teen Orientation
(for those **beginning**
the high school program)

September 20-22: Teen Retreat at Kamp Kuper

Class Dates:

CORE COURSE Sept. 29, Oct. 6, 13, 20, 27, 2013

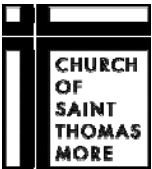
MINI COURSE Nov. 3, 10, 17, 2013

CORE COURSE Jan. 12, 19, 26, Feb. 9, 23, 2014

MINI COURSE Mar. 2, 9, 16, 2014

MINI COURSE Apr. 6, 13, 27, 2014

All courses are 6:30-8:30 PM



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parishoffice@stmoside.org



StThomasMoreRCC

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